

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07
INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 IO-13 TRSE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /103 W
-----040628Z 121239 /15

R 040439Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7428
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 6456

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, JA
SUBJECT: SOHYO'S NEW LOOK

REF: 76 TOKYO 18930 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: SINCE ASSUMING OFFICE IN JULY 1976, TEAM OF SOHYO
PRES MAKIEDA AND SECGEN TOMIZUKA, BY PRONOUNCEMENTS AND
SPECIFIC ACTIONS, HAVE ATTEMPTED TO MOVE CONFEDERATION IN
MODERATE DIRECTION, AWAY FROM MARXIST IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS.
HIGH ON LIST OF PRIORITIES IS IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH
WESTERN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, PARTICULARLY AFL-CIO. NEW
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LEADERSHIP TEAM APPARENTLY HOPES THESE INITIATIVES WILL
PRESERVE SOHYO'S UNITY AND AT LEAST SLOW DOWN LONG-
PENDING EFFORTS TO REORGANIZE MAJOR PRIVATE SECTOR
UNIONS INTO SINGLE NON-COMMUNIST GROUPING. GOJ
OFFICIALS HAVE WELCOMED SOHYO'S NEW LOOK AND BELIEVE
EXPANDED CONTACTS WITH AFL-CIO WILL ENCOURAGE EVEN
FURTHER MODERATION ON SOHYO'S PART BUT WORRY LEST

DOMEI'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH AFL-CIO BE JEOPARDIZED.
DOMEI LEADERS ARE EVEN MORE CONCERNED AND MAY ARGUE AGAINST
PLACING ANY FAITH IN SOHYO AT FORTHCOMING SUMMIT TALKS
WITH AFL-CIO. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE TAKING OFFICE IN JULY 1976, SOHYO'S NEW
LEADERSHIP TEAM OF CHAIRMAN MOTOFUMI MAKIEDA AND
MITSUO TOMIZUKA HAVE MADE MAJOR EFFORT TO REVITALIZE
JAPAN'S LARGEST LABOR CONFEDERATION (4.6 MILLION
MEMBERS). IN LAST EIGHT MONTHS, THEY HAVE LAUNCHED
SERIES OF INITIATIVES WHICH MEDIA, IF NOT RIVAL LABOR
CONFEDERATIONS, TERM SOHYO'S NEW, MORE REALISTIC LOOK.

2. MAKIEDA AND TOMIZUKA INHERITED ORGANIZATION WHICH
DELEGATE TO LAST YEAR'S CONVENTION CALLED "DYING
ELEPHANT." COMMITTED ON PAPER TO MARXIST ANALYSIS OF
JAPANESE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTY (JCP) AND SOCIALIST
PARTY (JSP), AND DOMINATED BY PUBLIC-SECTOR UNIONS
WHOSE FREQUENT ILLEGAL "POLITICAL" STRIKES ANTAGONIZED
GENERAL PUBLIC. AT HEADQUARTERS LEVEL SOHYO CULTIVATED
SOVIET, CHINESE AND OTHER COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED LABOR
ORGANIZATIONS WHILE IGNORING NON-COMMUNIST ASIA AND
WESTERN EUROPE, AND LAMBASTING THE US. SOHYO'S STATE-
MENTS AND ACTIONS IN SHORT HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY
IRRELEVANT TO CONCERNS OF CONTEMPORARY JAPAN TO POINT
THAT NO NON-COMMUNIST SOHYO-AFFILIATED PRIVATE SECTOR
UNION LEADER WAS WILLING TO RUN FOR CHAIRMANSHIP LAST
JULY. PROSPECTS THEN WERE FOR ORGANIZATION TO COLLAPSE
OF ITS OWN WEIGHT. PARTLY BECAUSE OUTLOOK FOR SOHYO
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WAS SO BLEAK, MAKIEDA -- PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS
UNINSPIRING LEADER OF BADLY DIVIDED TEACHERS' UNION
-- AND TOMIZUKA -- LABELED AS OPPORTUNIST BY HIS
ENEMIES IN NATIONAL RAILWAY UNION -- WERE VOTED INTO
LEADERSHIP WITH NO GREAT HOPES ON PART OF SOHYO'S
MODERATES AND NO FEARS ON PART OF COMMUNISTS AND
OTHER MARXISTS THAT CHANGES WERE IN OFFING.

3. NEITHER SOHYO RANK-AND-FILE NOR PUBLIC OPINION WAS
PREPARED FOR WHAT FOLLOWED. MAKIEDA, CONCERNING HIM-
SELF PRIMARILY WITH SOHYO'S TIES TO FOREIGN LABOR
UNIONS, ONLY ONE WEEK AFTER TAKING OFFICE IN SURPRISE
MEETING WITH AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MEANY IN WASHINGTON
AGREED TO MAKE JOINT EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN TWO LARGEST LABOR CONFEDERATIONS IN NON-
COMMUNIST WORLD. (SOHYO AND AFL-CIO LEADERS HAD NOT
MET SINCE 1964.) ARGUING THAT SOHYO HAD STRAYED FROM
ITS POLICY OF NEUTRALITY BETWEEN EAST AND WEST, MAKIEDA
FOLLOWED UP WASHINGTON VISIT WITH APPEALS FOR GREATER

CONTACT BETWEEN SOHYO OFFICIALS AND THEIR COUNTERPARTS
IN US. ONE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCE WAS DECISION BY JAPAN
TEACHERS' UNION (NIKKYOSO) AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS
(JICHIRO) TO PARTICIPATE IN LABOR EXCHANGE PROGRAM.
(THEY NOW VISITING US AS PART OF URBAN PROBLEMS TEAM.)
MAKIEDA HAS ALSO CALLED FOR MORE EMPHASIS ON TIES WITH
SOUTHEAST ASIAN UNIONS (SOHYO HELD SEMINAR FOR NON-
COMMUNIST SEA UNIONS IN MARCH) AND BETTER RELATIONS
WITH ICFTU AND ITS ASIAN REGIONAL ORGANIZATION (THEIR
LEADERS MET WITH SOHYO IN MARCH AND SOHYO OFFICERS WILL
ATTEND ARO-SPONSORED GATHERING IN SINGAPORE THIS MONTH).
IN SOHYO'S INTERNATIONAL BUREAU, SOURCE OF MOST VICIOUS
ANTI-AMERICAN DIATRIBES OVER LAST DECADE, ORDERS HAVE
BEEN QUIETLY GIVEN TO TONE DOWN RHETORIC IN ENGLISH-
LANGUAGE SOHYO NEWS TO STOP SUPPLYING CONTROVERSIAL
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COLUMN TO SOHYO'S VERNACULAR
HOUSE ORGAN, AND TO PROVIDE STAFFERNORIHISA ARAI,
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ALUMNUS OF ICFTU-AFFILIATED POSTAL WORKERS AND ADVOCATE
OF CLOSER SOHYO-AFL-CIO TIES, MAXIMUM WORKING-LEVEL
RESPONSIBILITY IN SOHYO FOR LIAISON WITH WESTERN UNIONS
AS WELL AS EMBASSIES IN TOKYO.

4. MOST RECENTLY, SOHYO-FUNDED INSTITUTE FOR ASIAN
LABOR STUDIES, HEADED BY ARAI, DEVOTED ENTIRE MARCH
ISSUE OF ITS PUBLICATION TO COLLOQUIUM WITH MAKIEDA,
IN WHICH HE AGAIN MADE EXPLICIT IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED
TO WESTERN LABOR UNION CONNECTION, PARTICULARLY WITH
AFL-CIO. MAKIEDA SAID HIS MOTIVE FOR MEETING WITH
PRESIDENT MEANY IN AUGUST 1976 WAS TO INITIATE RESTORA-
TION OF RELATIONS WITH AFL-CIO AND HE FOUND MEANY
RECEPTIVE TO THIS SUGGESTION. HE ADDED THAT IMPROVEMENT
IN RELATIONS WITH AFL-CIO WAS IMPORTANT STEP IN RETURN-
ING SOHYO TO PRINCIPLE SUPPOSEDLY GOVERNING FOREIGN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TOKYO 6456

RELATIONS SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT: EQUAL, NON-POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH LABOR MOVEMENTS IN ALL COUNTRIES, REGARDLESS OF IDEOLOGY. HE SAID COMMUNISTS IN SOHYO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, WHO CRITICIZED HIM FOR TALKS WITH MEANY AND OTHER INITIATIVES VIS-A-VIS "FREE WORLD" LABOR, WERE ATTEMPTING TO IMPOSE "IDEOLOGY" ON MATTERS WHICH SHOULD BE STRICTLY NON-POLITICAL. ADDING CAUTIONARY NOTE ABOUT DEEP RIVALRY BETWEEN SOHYO AND DOMEI, HE SAID: "I SUSPECT IT MIGHT NOT BE PLEASANT FOR DOMEI IF SOHYO MOVES TOWARDS CLOSER RELATIONS WITH AFL-CIO. IN VIEW OF THAT, I CAN WELL IMAGINE THAT AFL-CIO WOULD BE HESITANT ABOUT RESTORING RELATIONS
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WITH SOHYO." (FULL ENGLISH TEXT OF ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION GIVEN TO GOOD, HARRIS AND AFL-CIO'S ERNIE LEE AT NEW DELHI LABATT CONFERENCE.)

5. MAKIEDA HAS ALSO STRESSED MODERATION ON THE HOME FRONT. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMB LAST DEC (REFTEL), HE LEFT US WITH STRONG IMPRESSION THAT WHILE SOHYO WAS STILL COMMITTED ON PAPER TO ABROGATING US-JAPAN SECURITY TREATY, NEW SOHYO LEADERSHIP WAS NO LONGER EVEN GIVING SIGNIFICANT LIP SERVICE TO ANTI-TREATY MOVEMENT. MAKIEDA CARRIED MESSAGE OF SOHYO REASONABLENESS TO FOREIGN PRESS CLUB IN MARCH AND THIS MONTH HE WILL BE FIRST SOHYO CHAIRMAN TO INITIATE DIALOGUE WITH RESIDENT AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN VIA SPEECH AT LOCAL

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. MAKIEDA RECENTLY ENGAGED IN STILL ANOTHER "FIRST," MEETING WITH CHAIRMAN KASUGA OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY (DSP, DOMEI'S POLITICAL ARM, WHICH SOHYO FOR 16 YEARS HAS ATTACKED AS TRAITOR TO SOCIALIST MOVEMENT.

6. TOMIZUKA, AS SOHYO'S PRINCIPAL POINT OF CONTACT WITH OTHER LABOR FEDERATIONS AS WELL AS WITH GOJ, HAS CONTRIBUTED EVEN MORE TO PUBLIC VIEW THAT SOHYO HAS CHANGED. ONE OF FEW SOHYO LEADERS WHO, OVER YEARS, HAS CULTIVATED RULING LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY POLITICIANS AND MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIALS THROUGH GOLF MATCHES AND DRINKING SPREES ON GINZA, TOMIZUKA SUCCEEEDED LAST SEPTEMBER IN NEGOTIATING BEHIND SCENES WITH THEM MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT OF RAIL DISPUTE, THUS AVERTING POLITICALLY INSPIRED STRIKE. HE ALSO QUIETLY BURIED LINGERING POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER PUBLIC SECTOR WALKOUT ON BEHALF OF RIGHT TO STRIKE, ISSUE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR "EARLY RETIREMENT" OF PREVIOUS SOHYO LEADERSHIP LAST SUMMER. HE TOOK LEAD IN COORDINATING WITH OTHER THREE LABOR CONFEDERATIONS NOT ONLY SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING EFFORT IN DIET ON BEHALF OF SIZABLE TAX REBATE, BUT ALSO
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ESTABLISHMENT OF REALISTIC TARGETS FOR THIS SPRING'S WAGE NEGOTIATIONS. TOMIZUKA HAS EMERGED AS MEDIA FIGURE, APPEARING ON TV TALK SHOWS AND IN WEEKLY MAGAZINES TO EXPLAIN THE NEW "SOHYO" AND TO DEBATE WITH ENTERTAINMENT FIGURES AND INTELLECTUALS WHAT SOHYO MUST DO TO SHED ITS NEGATIVE PUBLIC IMAGE.

7. IN ALL OF THESE MOVES, MAKIEDA AND TOMIZUKA HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO ARGUE THAT THEY ARE NOT TAMPERING WITH SOHYO'S BASIC POLICY LINE BUT MERELY RECTIFYING THE IDEOLOGICAL EXCESSES OF THEIR PREDECESSORS. THEY ARE EQUALLY CAREFUL NOT TO ELABORATE FURTHER ON SOHYO'S IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS IN ORDER TO KEEP SOHYO'S BASIC POLICY LINE DELIBERATELY VAGUE. THEY HAVE NOT CHALLENGED DIRECTLY THE COMMUNIST MINORITY IN SOHYO. THEY CONTINUE TO ESPOUSE AN OPPOSITION COALITION INCLUDING THE JCP AS THEIR POLITICAL GOAL, AND MAINTAIN THEIR SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED EXCHANGES WITH SOVIET, EASTERN EUROPEAN AND PRC FRIENDSHIP GROUPS AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. FURTHERMORE, THEY ARE HOSTILE TO EFFORTS, LED BY JAPAN COUNCIL OF METAL WORKERS (IMF-JC) AFFILIATES, TO REGROUP ALL MAJOR PRIVATE SECTOR INDUSTRIAL FEDERATIONS, NOW DIVIDED AMONG THE FOUR NATIONAL CONFEDERATIONS, INTO A SINGLE ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING A NON-COMMUNIST LEFT-WING ALTERNATIVE TO LDP. THEIR AIM IN MODERATING SOHYO'S POLICIES IS TO PRESERVE SOHYO UNITY AND NOT TO BRING

ABOUT A SPLIT IN THE ORGANIZATION.

8. LOCAL REACTION TO DEVELOPMENTS IN SOHYO VARIES CONSIDERABLY. LABOR MINISTRY WELCOMES NEW MAKIEDA-TOMIZUKA LINE AND HOPES THAT SOHYO'S OVERTURES TO AFL-CIO WILL BEAR SOME FRUIT. AT SAME TIME, MINISTRY OFFICIALS WONDER JUST HOW FAR NEW LEADERSHIP CAN GO BEFORE COMMUNIST MINORITY BEGINS TO ORGANIZE ROLLBACK CAMPAIGN. OTHER GOJ OFFICIALS SUCH AS DEPUTY CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY DOSHO (WHO PERSUADED PRIMIN FUKUDA CONFIDENTIAL

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TO MEET WITH MEANY IN WASHINGTON LAST MONTH), WHILE VERY MUCH IN FAVOR OF EXPANDED EXCHANGES BETWEEN AFL-CIO AND SOHYO, USE NIXON "CHINA SHOCK" ANALOGY TO EXPRESS CONCERN THAT SOME AFL-CIO UNIONS, IN RESPONDING TO SOHYO OVERTURES, MIGHT IN THE PROCESS JETTISON THEIR "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" TO DOMEI.

9. DOMEI LEADERS, WHILE CONTINUING TO CALL ON SOHYO TO ABANDON ITS IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS AND ADOPT REALISTIC TRADE UNION POSITIONS, ARGUE THAT MAKIEDA-TOMIZUKA INITIATIVES ARE JUST "WINDOW DRESSING" DISGUIISING SOHYO'S MARXIST NATURE. WHILE THEY HAVE JOINED WITH SOHYO HEADQUARTERS IN PLANNING TAX REBATE LOBBYING CAMPAIGN AND, MOST RECENTLY, IN PROTESTING SOVIET STANCE IN FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS AND THEY HAVE NOT MADE MAJOR EFFORT TO BLOCK CONTACTS BETWEEN SOHYO AND ICFTU AFFILIATES IN OTHER NATIONS, THEY ARE NOT EAGER TO SEE SOHYO CONTACTS WITH AFL-CIO EXPANDED. THEREFORE, WHILE NOT NOW ON AGENDA OF DOMEI'S "SUMMIT MEETING" WITH AFL-CIO IN WASHINGTON MAY 16-20, SOHYO'S NEW LOOK AND HOW TO INTERPRET IT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE A PRINCIPAL TOPIC OF CONVERSATION DURING THE SESSIONS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR RELATIONS, LABOR UNIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TOKYO06456
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770155-1210
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770592/aaaadcab.tel
Line Count: 318
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5b3c8c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TOKYO 18930
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2637657
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOHYO'S NEW LOOK
TAGS: ELAB, JA, AFL-CIO, SOHYO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5b3c8c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009